



# COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS

STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES

## Active Constructive Responding



## 6 Core Competencies

- **Self Awareness**- Identify thoughts, emotions and behaviors and patterns in thinking and behaviors
- **Self Regulation**- Regulate impulses, emotions and behaviors to achieve goals
- **Optimism** - Hunt for what is good, remain realistic, maintain hope and have confidence in self and team
- **Mental Agility**- Think flexibly and accurately take other perspectives
- **Strengths of Character** - Knowledge of top strengths and how to use them to overcome challenges and meet goals
- **Connection** - Strong relationships, positive and effective communication, empathy, a willingness to ask for help and help those you lead



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# Active Constructive Responding and Effective Praise



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army



# **Active Constructive Responding and Effective Praise: B.L.U.F.**

- Active Constructive Responding (ACR) and Effective Praise help to build Connection.
- You can strengthen your relationships by responding actively and constructively to others' positive experiences.
- Effective Praise identifies what was working and creates winning streaks.



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# **Build Strong Relationships through ACR**

**Based on work by Shelly Gable**

- There are four ways people tend to respond when others share good news, talk about a positive experience, or describe a success.
- Only one of the four styles leads to stronger relationships.



# What do we mean by positive experience?

- The chow hall had ice cream and we were allowed to eat it.
- I maxed my PT test.
- I passed inspection.
- I got a weekend pass.
- I got to call home last night.
- It wasn't so hot out.



## But... how the other person responds matters.

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Authentic interest</b></li><li>• <b>Elaborates the experience</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Squashing the event</li><li>• Negative focus</li></ul>
Passive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distracted, understated support</li><li>• Conversation fizzles out</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ignoring the event</li><li>• Changing the conversation to another topic</li></ul>



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## Demo 1

	Constructive	Destructive
Active		
Passive	Conversation Killer	





	Constructive	Destructive
Active		
Passive	Conversation Killer	Conversation Hijacker



	Constructive	Destructive
Active		Joy Thief
Passive	Conversation Killer	Conversation Hijacker



	Constructive	Destructive
Active	Joy Multiplier	Joy Thief
Passive	Conversation Killer	Conversation Hijacker



- What if you don't care about the news?
- What if the news is dangerous?
- What if you have concerns about the good news?



## My Patterns

### What prevents me from staying in the ACR box?

- Distracted
- Mood

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	<p>My kids (50%)</p> <p>Friends (70%)</p> <p>Students (70%)</p> <p>Colleagues (80%)</p> <p>Wife (30%)</p>	<p>My wife (30%)</p> <p>My kids (20%)</p> <p>Friends (10%)</p> <p>Students (10%)</p>
Passive	<p>My wife (20%)</p> <p>My Kids (20%)</p> <p>Colleagues (20%)</p> <p>Friends (10%)</p> <p>Students (20%)</p>	<p>My Wife (20%)</p> <p>My kids (10%)</p> <p>Friends (10%)</p> <p>Colleagues (10%)</p>



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# My ACR Moment



- Make a list of the key people in your life
- Think about which of the responding styles you typically use with each individual
- Record each individual's name in the box that indicates your typical way of responding with that person
- Next to each name, write the percentage of time you respond to that person in that style
- Identify factors that lead to non-AC responses and factors that lead to ACR



# What are your patterns? Debrief

- What did you learn about where names fit into the boxes?
- What makes this activity hard?
- What character strengths can help you to stay in the ACR box?





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# **Make Your Praise Praiseworthy: A Special Case of Active Constructive Responding**



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army



- When someone we care about fails, underperforms, or struggles, we don't say, "Man, you are dumb as a rock."
- Effective criticism names the process, strategy, behavior that led to the problem (e.g., "You aren't keeping your arm level") and how to correct it.



- When you recognize someone and offer praise, name the specific strategy, effort, or skill that led to the good outcome. It just takes another sentence.
- Naming strategy does three things:
  - Demonstrates you were really watching
  - Demonstrates authenticity
  - Enables winning streaks
- This is an AAR at the individual level.



- **Four types of responding:** There are four ways people tend to respond when others share a positive experience: AC, AD, PC, PD.
- **ACR:** ACR conveys authentic interest, and the responder helps the sharer think more deeply about the positive experience.
- **Benefits of ACR:** ACR leads to stronger relationships, belonging, well-being, and life satisfaction for both parties.
- **Effective Praise:** Name the strategy, process, or behavior that led to the good outcome. It builds motivation, optimism, and winning streaks.
- **Connection:** Connection is a primary target of ACR and Effective Praise.



- Activities:
  - ACR and Effective Praise Partner Practice



- Person 1 shares positive experience and Person 2 practices ACR and Effective Praise (if Effective Praise is appropriate).
- Discuss questions at the bottom of page and record key learning to share with group.



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army



- What was effective in using ACR and Effective Praise?
- What do you need to keep in mind when you are sharing your own positive experiences?
- What do you need to keep in mind when you are responding to others' positive experiences?



- What are the ways you give and receive praise in the Army (one-on-one; public acknowledgments, symbolic rewards, etc.)?
- How are ACR and Effective Praise already used in the Army?
- How can you further incorporate ACR and Effective Praise in the way you cultivate teams, offer recognition, or communicate about successes (with Army and family)?





**What is the skill?** Active Constructive Responding (ACR) is a method of communication in which the responder conveys authentic interest and helps the person to relive the positive experience. Effective Praise focuses on the strategy, behavior, or process that brought the good outcome.

**When do I use it?** Use ACR when someone shares a positive experience with you and Praise when you want to build motivation and performance.

**How do I use it?** Respond to positive experiences by conveying interest and by asking questions. When giving Effective Praise, name the behavior, strategy, or process.